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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted at Flagstaff Arizona High School from November to December 1969. School communications as determined by the teachers, administrators, and staff of the school were surveyed. The student perspective of interpersonal communications in the school is also presented. The students see their communications with various members of the faculty, administration, and staff as poorer than the teachers view their communications with the same people, excluding the counselors. The counselors while rating lowest with the teachers, rate highest with the students. Students suggested specific changes in the organizational and personal behavior of teachers, administrators, and staff. Additional informal meetings of the different groups provided data on further areas of conflict that need more examination, such as teacher-counselor interaction, and minority group prejudice. Four important principles for good communication are presented as possible future guidelines: 1) creation of an informal atmosphere, 2) lessening of role playing to the point needed to maintain the structure of the school, 3) the willingness of all persons to share feelings as well as thoughts, and 4) the development of trust in all people in the school. Copies of the survey instruments are included. (AE)

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AN EVALUATION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN FLAGSTAFF HIGH SCHOOL

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the NASEC studies of mid-year graduates from the Flagstaff high schools in 1967-68 and 1968-69, both of which were requested by the Flagstaff School Board, an effort is being made to bring about an improvement in two-way interpersonal communications between all people in Flagstaff High School. They include the students, the faculty, the administration, and the staff.

Such an improvement in communications should help meet many of the needs of students as expressed in the mid-year graduate studies. This project will also meet an important recommendation of the North Central Association which states that a continuous evaluation should be made of student attitudes and faculty morale, both of which can be determined from this study.

Many people were consulted before the final plans for this project were made -- students, counselors, teachers, supervisors, and administrators. Early in the 1969-70 school year a meeting was held with Assistant Superintendents Don C. Clark and David A. Williams, and High School Principals Paul E. Schreiber and Brian Turner, at which time additional suggestions were made and final approval was given for the general plan. All activities to be carried out were to be planned so that they would interfere as little as possible with the regular operations of the school. The project would be undertaken first in Flagstaff High School and then in Coconino High School.

II. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The first step in this project was to make an assessment of interpersonal communications as it now exists in Flagstaff High School. It was decided that this should not be done too early in the school year, before communications had time to be established.

Dividing the assessment itself from efforts to bring about improvements is difficult because the assessment, especially in discussion meetings, focuses attention on the problem and may bring about changes for that reason alone.

The assessment proceeded as follows:

1. On November 4 a brief account of the project was given at a regular high school faculty meeting. Questionnaires (see sample in appendix) for the teachers were distributed and a total of 29 (out of the 39 full-time teachers and the 11 who divide their teaching time between this and other schools) were returned. Questionnaires were also given to the two administrators,

three counselors, librarian, library aide, four secretaries, and school nurse, all of which were filled out and returned. Eight school district supervisors also filled out questionnaires. The custodians were given questionnaires but declined to return them.

2. On November 12 during the second period of school, questionnaires (see sample in appendix) were given to students who took a few minutes out of their regular class time to fill them out. Students in classes such as physical education where it would be difficult to fill out the questionnaires were not included in the survey. A total of 508 questionnaires were filled out and returned. (The total school membership, which includes the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, was 886.)

3. Starting on November 13 and continuing through November 26 the writer met with a total of seventeen different classes, mostly in classes of English and human relations where communications would be an appropriate subject to discuss. Members of the classes sat in circles and discussed among themselves and with those of the faculty and staff present the status of interpersonal communications and how it could be improved. Teachers other than the one in charge of each class were invited to attend during their work periods. Also the counselors, librarian, secretaries, supervisors, assistant principal, and principal attended one or more class meetings. Altogether thirty-six members of the faculty, administration, and staff were included, as well as 371 students, most of whom were juniors and seniors.

III. REPORTING THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

At the regular meeting of the high school faculty on December 2 a brief report was made of the statistical results of the survey as well as a general overview of the suggestions from the students, faculty, administration, and staff. There was a limited discussion of the results.

An article in the school newspaper Green and Brown on December 12, "NASEC Conducts Survey", explained the project to its readers and gave some of the results which were obtained during an hour-long interview with the writer.

Further reporting on the study will be made starting in January 1970 to the teachers, individually and in groups, as well as to others on the faculty, the administration, the staff, classes of students, the superintendent and his staff, and the school board. This report will also be made available to all who are interested and will be a part of the reporting procedure.

It is hoped that such activities as these will focus attention on the need for good communications and will result in improvement.

IV. SURVEY OF FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, AND STAFF

The teachers were asked by unsigned questionnaires to check their two-way communications relationship with other school personnel in the categories of no contact, poor, fair, good, and excellent. With the principal, the assistant principal, the librarian, the secretaries, and fellow teachers communications were good, but with the nurse, counselors, and custodians communications were only fair. (See Figure 1.) The communications index shown in Figure 1 was determined just as grade averages are with a 1.0 given for an excellent rating, a 2.0 for good, a 3.0 for fair, and a 4.0 for poor.

When teachers were asked to report the percentage of their students with whom they felt they had good two-way communications, the responses varied from 20% to 90% as indicated in Table I. The average was 60%.

TABLE I.

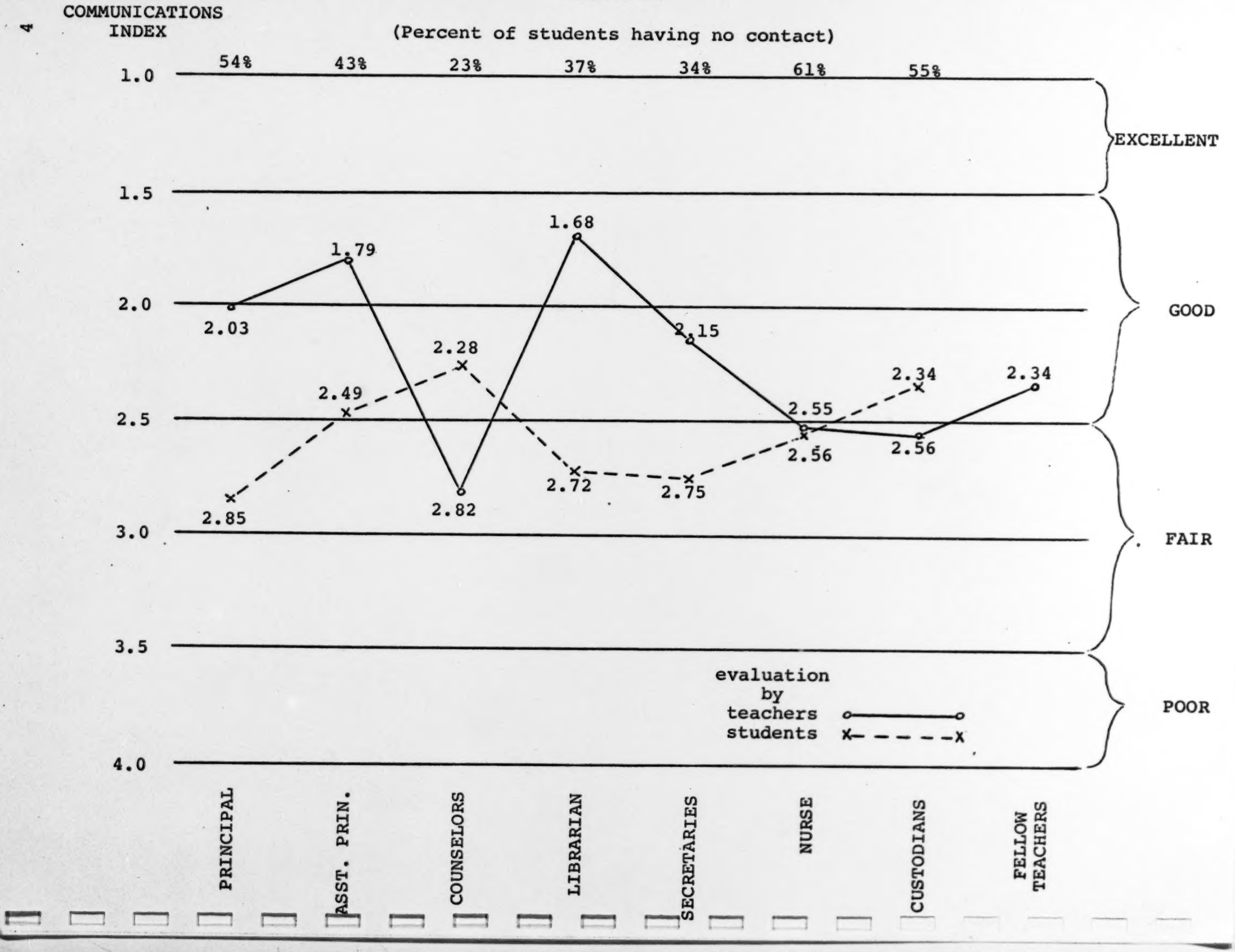
PERCENT OF STUDENTS
WITH WHOM TEACHERS HAVE GOOD COMMUNICATIONS
AS DETERMINED BY THE TEACHERS

Percent of students	Number of teachers	Percent of students	Number of teachers
0%	0	60%	1
10%	0	70%	5
20%	3	80%	5
30%	5	90%	5
40%	1	100%	0
50%	3	no response	1

Sixteen of the teachers wrote comments on their questionnaires in response to the open-ended statement "I think we would have better communications if..." as follows:

1. "if everyone approached communications in the spirit of negotiation."
2. "if both teachers and students had more empathy towards each other. We teachers fail to consider why many students behave the way they do and don't try to communicate as we should."
3. "if all those affected by decision making (at all levels) were afforded the opportunity of being consulted or involved in discussing mutual problem areas--particularly students."

FIGURE I.


COMMUNICATIONS INDEX
(Percent of students having no contact)
54%
43%
23%
37%
34%
61%
55%
1.0
1.5
2.0
2.5
3.0
3.5
4.0
EXCELLENT
GOOD
FAIR
POOR
2.03
1.79
1.68
2.15
2.55
2.56
2.56
2.34
2.34
2.85
2.49
2.28
2.82
2.72
2.75
evaluation by teachers
students
PRINCIPAL
ASST. PRIN.
COUNSELORS
LIBRARIAN
SECRETARIES
NURSE
CUSTODIANS
FELLOW TEACHERS

4. "if the principal was the first person to know what activities and projects are planned instead of the last to know. He could then serve as a coordinator so that conflicting ideas or projects would be minimized."
5. "if the faculty had more social types of gatherings. Also the lounge is rather out of the way. I think it should be more centralized."
6. "if department members could have an opportunity to meet together with the principal and without the principal during school hours."
7. "when those responsible for leadership have the desire for such communications."
8. "Give higher administrators in-service training in communications."
9. "if the people concerned want to communicate and see some reason for communicating."
10. "if specific time is designated or allocated for this purpose. Presently most school personnel do not have schedules which allow sufficient time for contacts. Contact time with students is practically non-existent on an individual basis. Administrators and others generally have little time for communications at the critical time when problems arise."
11. "if more time was spent on improvement of instruction and correlation of subjects and less time on minor reports. There aren't enough visitations from the supervisors or administrators where rapport (good or bad) can be established. Too many minor details, lunch duty, hall duty, dances, tardies, absences, dismissal from room for guidance, immediately create a rebellious form of attitude which makes it difficult for good communication."
12. "if our principals and assistants stopped working on such things as: (1) Teacher details--providing supplies, etc. (2) Class scheduling (3) Misc. sundries. Instead our leaders should read more, attend more conventions, especially in the disciplines of English, history, business, math, etc. Also, displays of companies usually provide an insight into the latest inventions available in the teaching media. This would aid the purchasing agent, Mr. Killip, to know better what he was doing in the springtime. I would like to see principals become more creative and <u>lead</u> the teachers, who have to innovate things on their own time, when, rightfully, administrators should be devoting much of their time to this area."
13. "if I were more gregarious and sociable."
14. "if we had an intercom system in each room. If the head office would pay more attention to our small but important problems. For a school this size there should be another assistant principal so the principal and the now assistant principal would have more time to do their jobs. More understanding of the jobs of others."

15. "I believe that our communications are acceptable at the present time. I think we have a communications gap between the teacher and the Indian students. This is the result of the environment of the Indian students."
16. "Do we need two-way communications in teaching? I feel rather like I operate in a vacuum and I rather enjoy things this way. I feel I am a good and effective teacher and get along fine with the administration as well as the janitors. I think in English or history you would need more trust, mutual understanding, affection, communication, etc., but in science or mathematics where the material is more 'unemotional' this is not necessary."

As to other faculty members, the librarian with whom the teachers say they have the best communications, sees her communications as good with everyone except custodians and students with whom it is fair. (The students confirm this, giving a fair rating to their communications with the librarian. See Figure I.)

The librarian made these comments on her questionnaire. "I think we would have better communications in this school if faculty meetings didn't start and end with time limitations. (One hour per month wouldn't hurt.) Divide our faculty into standing committees to work on aspects of school needs. Working together improves communications."

The three high school counselors see their communications relationship with teachers as being from fair to good. (The teachers see it as only fair as indicated in Figure I.) But the counselors have the highest communications index with the students of all school personnel.

Two of the counselors made written comments in completion of the statement "I think we would have better communications in this school if..." One wrote, "if we had more frequent faculty meetings required with refreshments." The other said, "if we set a specific time to sit down together (small groups)--agenda casual."

The assistant principal sees his communications as excellent with all of the faculty and staff. He made this written comment, "I think we would have better communications in this school if all persons involved would speak up when they feel the need."

The principal believes his communications to be from good to excellent with the faculty and staff but only fair with the custodians. He made this statement on his questionnaire: "Regarding the custodians, a definite meeting schedule with them needs to be set up at periodic times. Teachers who float need to take more time to communicate directly with the office. Difficulty of reaching all faculty members at one sitting appears to cause a major break-down in philosophy of supervision and basic mechanics. Paper throw-sheets are all too inclusive as far as interpretation is concerned."

The four secretaries and library clerk indicated that their communications with the faculty and administration are, for the most part, good. Four of them wrote suggestions in response to the statement "I think we would have better communications in this school if..." as follows:

1. "if we had regular meetings with administrators in charge."
2. "if we could communicate better with the Indian students. There is a language barrier."
3. "if the secretaries could have regular meetings with the principal and assistant. Also, if the secretaries could sit in on teachers meetings sometimes to know a little bit more about other areas of the school. I also think that all the secretaries from all the schools should have regular meetings together to exchange ideas and needs and to have some possible training sessions if needed in any particular areas."
4. "if the principal were allowed to make more decisions. Two-way communication is good. However, we find it difficult to accomplish much as in a two-way communication because we are often reminded that there is the third communication which we find is very distant. Therefore, communication is frequently lost. I'm not much in favor of a suggestion box but it might help. Sometimes a secretary can see how situations could be improved but she feels she cannot express herself because of the educators around her. But a <u>good</u> secretary is at the top of her profession the same as someone who holds a certificate and is qualified to teach."

The school district supervisors were also asked for their assessment of interpersonal communications. Their response was that it was generally from good to excellent with a few exceptions. One supervisor brought up the important non-verbal aspect of communications with the statement, "I think we would have better communications in our two high schools if you didn't feel so guilty asking busy people to stop long enough to listen to your problems. There is often a harried look upon the face of the person you are talking to as if he wished you would hurry up so that he could take care of an emergency that was pending."

Another supervisor had this comment: "'Communication' can be wordless or expressed. It can be verbal or by gesture and attitude. Sometimes it is intuitive and often silent. Mainly communication is understanding and being understood, accepted. Difficult and painful, even critical things, can be communicated if we feel the communicator likes us, wishes us well, and cares about our welfare."

V. SURVEY OF STUDENTS

As indicated in Figure I, the students see their interpersonal communications with various members of the faculty, administration, and staff as poorer than the teachers see their communications with the same people, with the exception of the counselors. While the counselors rate lowest with the teachers, they are the highest with the students.

One factor which may have an effect on the communications index is the percentage of students, shown at the top of Figure I, having no contact with various people. While 54% of the students, for example, say they have had no contact with the principal, only 23% say they have had no contact with a counselor.

The students also gave their opinions as to how many of their teachers they have good two-way communications with. Sixty percent of the boys and fifty-seven percent of the girls believe they have good communications with half or more of their teachers as indicated in Table II.

TABLE II.

HOW STUDENTS SEE THEIR COMMUNICATIONS WITH TEACHERS

Good, two-way communications	BOYS		GIRLS	
With all teachers	13.7%		13.3%	
With more than half but not all	30.4%	60.5%	29.3%	57.0%
With one-half	16.4%		14.4%	
With fewer than half but at least one	26.6%	39.5%	30.1%	43.0%
With none	12.9%		12.9%	

Of the 508 questionnaires returned by the students, 430 (85%) contained comments. Most were in answer to the open-ended statement, "I think we would have better communications in this school if..."

Sixteen of the students, however, pointed out that they felt communications are good at the present time. As a senior boy put it, "I feel that you have good communications in the school now, that there isn't much room for improvement."

A small number of students--four to be exact--felt that it is better not to have good interpersonal communications. One of them, a sophomore girl, wrote, "I think I have pretty good contact with teachers. Because they never talk to me and I never talk to them. So our contact is beautiful."

Most of the students who made comments gave suggestions for improvements. What they had to say can be divided into two broad categories, first, what the students should do and, second, what the faculty, staff, and administration should do.

A number felt that students themselves should make more of an effort to communicate with others. A sophomore girl completed her statement by saying, "if I start talking to teachers and students more often." Another, a senior girl, said, simply, "if more students cared."

Others saw good communications as a cooperative effort by everyone. Things would be better "if teachers and students became aware of one another and tried to communicate with one another. Apathy such as exists in the non-existent teacher-student relationship is bad for both," a junior grade girl wrote. "If both students and teachers would give a little more, especially some of the students" was the way a sophomore boy put it.

Student-to-student communication came in for its share of examination. What most object to is that many students communicate only with their friends. A senior girl saw improvement possible "if there weren't such tight cliques." A junior boy said, "I despise cliques." A sophomore boy, in the writer's opinion, showed considerable perception when he wrote, "if we weren't all so narrow minded. This is not only teachers but students too. We are all so involved with our ideas that we don't listen to others, or even try to see their side. Also there is a big generation gap <u>in the students</u>. Teachers will listen (sometimes) and sometimes you can really talk to them. But if you try to talk to a student who is outside your clique, then you will find him unwilling to accept or even try to see your ideas. It's immature, I feel, when a person doesn't even try to hear you. It's a sad thing, and one of the things I find most disappointing about high school."

Concerning the need for changes in the behavior of some members of the faculty, administration, and staff, the students seem to see it in two ways. First, there is the personal behavior toward students and, second, there is organizational behavior. For example, in racial prejudice there might be personal bias against a minority group student, and there might be an organizational need to employ more minority group teachers. The feeling was strong in the thirty-five people who commented on it that such prejudice gets in the way of good communications.

A senior girl put the race problem in a broad perspective when she wrote, "if there wasn't so much prejudice, not only against races, but against the way some people act. They must learn to understand students more and should make an effort to help them in any way they possibly can. Too many teachers judge the students on one little mishappening. They don't hear the student out, instead they jump to conclusions. I think teachers, counselors, etc., should get to know the students for what they are instead of judging them from what they've heard about them. Students also need a better understanding of teachers, counselors, etc."

Changes suggested by students in the personal behavior of some members of the faculty, administration, and staff:

1. Listen and try to understand our problems.

    a. Senior girl - "if we had more teachers and others who are in the administration that understand kids and are willing to listen to our problems even if they don't pertain to school."
    b. Sophomore girl - "if the grownups would act like they cared for their students more than just as a teacher but as a friend also and understand a kid's problem or vice versa."
    c. Senior girl - "if the administration had a sincere, personal interest and concern for the students; if the teachers were interested in the subject they are teaching and in helping the students to honestly learn."
    d. Senior boy - "if some administrators and teachers weren't so concerned about losing their jobs and would just sit down and talk to the students. After all, some of the most important lessons to be learned aren't academic.
    e. Sophomore girl - "if people would be more interested in each other and concerned with what others feel."
    f. Sophomore girl - "if we had younger teachers who understand the younger generation better. And if people weren't as prejudiced towards each other."
    g. Senior girl - "if the students were given a chance to seriously voice their opinions and the adults would take what was said into serious consideration, not just say, 'Well, we don't like that,' or 'No! that's out of the question,' or 'That's a good suggestion, but you don't know enough about what you're talking about, so I'll forget it.' I think it works two ways!! There's got to be a 50-50 compromise in there and each must do their part and try to understand the other guy. If one side tries, the other will."
    h. Senior girl - "if the teachers didn't take the stand that everything they say is right and the students wrong."

i. Senior girl - "if people would be more friendly and wouldn't always be in a hurry trying to do something else. And if people would listen to others express their thoughts and ideas."
j. Sophomore boy - "if the teachers made more effort to know the student. Outside of class they act like they don't know you."
k. Sophomore girl - "if some of the teachers bothered to listen to the students' questions."
l. Senior boy - "if some of the teachers would start understanding that students are people too and not as dumb as they think."
m. Sophomore girl - "if more of the teachers would take time to listen and try to understand when we need help other than ignoring us."
n. Junior girl - "if everybody would try to understand each other. The administration could realize that kids are human. We're not out to destroy everything."
o. Senior girl - "if some teachers would realize that students are people too, with feelings of their own, ideas of their own, opinions of their own. Also if students would have a little consideration for other students, and for janitors. Also if administration was not so concerned with minute details of dress, the way you walk, etc., but more concerned with what the student is learning."
p. Senior boy - "if the teachers would take more time and patience to listen to the students and not argue a point that some do, to the degree they do."
q. Senior girl - "if the student were treated as an individual, because all have individual problems. Also, I have always had the feeling here at this school, that you are guilty until proven innocent. The teachers and students that I get along best with are the ones that I have respect for, and they in turn have faith and trust in me."

2. Get closer to our level and get involved.

a. Junior girl - "if the teachers let down the barriers and let us get to know them."
b. Junior boy - "if the teachers would learn our lingo."
c. Senior girl - "if teachers acted more like regular people. Some place themselves so far above students."
d. Sophomore girl - "if there was less of a grown-up to child relationship. I think it would help if there wasn't any hassle about guys' hair or girls wearing pants. We should have a suggestion box in each wing. Maybe we could get more ideas about how students feel We could publish some of the best ideas in the Green and Brown."

e. Junior boy - "if the teachers would put themselves in the students' place and make class more interesting."
f. Junior boy - "if the teachers would take part with the students and get involved."
g. Senior boy - "if the teachers would lower themselves enough to become involved with students."

3. Be more informal and friendly with us.

a. Sophomore boy - "if teachers would stop acting like teachers all (or most) of the time."
b. Senior girl - "if the teachers would smile a little more and not be so scared of acting a little silly once in a while. And maybe just once in a while come down to earth and not worry so much about their image."
c. Senior girl - "if there were not so many teachers who feel that they are so super-cool. Also there are a few who abide by the rules 100% of the time and take no exceptions."
d. Senior girl - "if the teachers wouldn't stress so much on grades and if they weren't so formal. Some times they act as if they really don't want to teach."
e. Senior girl - "if the teachers had more casual communication with students."
f. Senior girl - "if the teachers would allow students to speak freely in informal classes."
g. Junior boy - "if the teachers would be part of the group (students) but have just enough discipline."
h. Sophomore boy - "if we had more teachers who were fun and yet could teach the students more than they already know. If a teacher is fun, the students would like him more and want to listen to every word he says."
i. Sophomore girl - "if the teachers tried to be more personal with the student and not worry so much about giving homework. Have a more personal basis, so that the student feels at ease with the teacher. Have the principal and assistant principal be more friendly towards the students."
j. Sophomore girl - "if some of the teachers would care a little more and smile like they enjoy it. Sometimes you don't feel like smiling but I have a couple of teachers who never smile. Lack of communication comes also from students who like to make trouble. I don't think we'll ever have perfect communication because of students who make trouble and teachers who are unreasonable and don't care."

4. Treat us as individuals.

   a. Senior boy - "if we were treated more as individuals and less like a number in a roll book."
   b. Senior boy - "if the teachers cared more about you personally."
   c. Senior boy - "Some of the teachers (not all) treat the students as inferior people, like they don't really count."
   d. Senior boy - "if other people would care about someone else besides themselves."
   e. Senior girl - "if both teachers and students tried to understand each other, and also if the principal would spend more time with the students and maybe talk to them in small groups or all in one large group."

5. Make it possible for us to get to know the administrators better and for them to know us better.

   a. Senior boy - "if the administration was more sensitive to the desires of the students, and if the students were more informed and more sensitive to the desires of the administration. We need an inquiry-oriented curriculum, which involves our school activities with the real world."
   b. Senior girl - "if we would see more of the principal and others and also talk to them because some students are afraid to stop and talk to them."
   c. Senior girl - "if administrators would be willing to listen to students, all students, as intelligent individuals. No one is trying to buck their power when we have certain demands; so why take it that way."
   d. Senior girl - "if the students would express clearly what they wanted and if the administration would ask to see what the students wanted."
   e. Junior boy - "if the principal would listen to our problems instead of always sending us to the counselors for help."
   f. Junior boy - "if school officials would come and talk with students and find out what's happening."
   g. Senior boy - "if the administration would get to know the students better."
   h. Senior girl - "if not everyone thought of themselves as superior. If you could talk to the principal or assistant principal with a relaxed feeling."
   i. Sophomore girl - "if the principal were a little friendlier because he is the one everyone looks up to."
   j. Senior boy - "if we saw more of the people in the front office."
   k. Sophomore boy - "if people would try to be nice to everybody. Have the principal communicate with the kids more often."

6. Trust us more.

   a. Sophomore girl - "if the faculty and the administration would put more trust in the students with ideas and projects, and if they'd take more of an interest in the things we do and how we feel. Also, if they wouldn't be so afraid of change in our school. Whenever we want something changed that might seem a little drastic, the administration is afraid to say 'yes' just because it is a new idea. It seems like they mean to say, 'Let's wait until some other schools do it first then maybe we'll try it.'"
   b. Junior girl - "if the students were trusted more and if there were a better system of learning in some of the classes. Also many times classes deal with things that are not relevant to the overall study material."
   c. Junior girl - "if many teachers could come out with a more interesting class, one that a student could really look forward to, and learn in. Also, I think a system where the students could be trusted would improve the school immensely."

7. Don't be prejudiced against members of minority groups.

   a. Sophomore girl - "if there was a better relationship between races."
   b. Junior girl - "if everybody would forget what color they are."
   c. Junior girl - "if people would mind their own business and not be so prejudiced toward colored people."
   d. Junior boy - "if the school taught a little bit of our Indian culture and maybe the language to make the school more interesting and we'll have better communications."

Changes suggested by the students in the organizational behavior of some members of the faculty, administration, and staff.

1. Conduct more class discussions.

   a. Junior boy - "if the teacher-student relationship in classes was increased. More from the teachers (debates, discussions) and less from books."
   b. Junior girl - "if we had more classes that don't go by the book word for word. Most of my books are so outdated that I need only common sense to learn. I wish we could have more openness in class discussing our views and learning from each other rather than a book."
   c. Sophomore girl - "if teachers took more time in class to identify with and try to understand their students through class discussion, and much less time on 'the books.' This would lead to better communications between both student-teacher and student-student."
   d. Senior boy - "if more people took classes that involve

communications. (Mr. Wallace, for example, spent one six weeks period discussing communications using the booklet 'Taking a Stand.') The faculty should take a sensitivity training course. When teachers understand, they can be the example to the students."

2. There should be more activities in which both students and teachers could participate.

   a. Senior boy - "if there were more school activities that involved more students and more teachers."
   b. Junior girl - "if there were more activities that everyone could attend during school hours because there are people that live in Sedona and out of town and it's hard for them to attend after-school activities."
   c. Senior boy - "if the students had more contact with their teachers, the principal, and other school members, and if there would be more school sponsored activities in the school."
   d. Senior girl - "if teachers would be more willing to help the kids and be with the kids. Some teachers will stay to help with projects so they'll have a sponsor but it's usually the same people over and over. Other teachers should help too."
   e. Sophomore boy - "if the teachers and students would have more activities that involve both teachers and students."
   f. Senior boy - "if there were more social relations between students, student council, and administration. More social events during school hours."

3. Smaller classes are needed.

   a. Sophomore girl - "if classes were smaller teachers could become better acquainted with the students and vice versa. Smaller classes would enable the teacher to consider and grade each student according to his ability, not just with the best student's ability."
   b. Senior boy - "if we had smaller classes so the student could communicate with the teacher on a more personal level."

4. Make use of the suggestion box.

   a. Sophomore boy - "if we had a suggestion box in each class."
   b. Senior girl - "if there were less people in every class so that the teachers would have more time to spend with each student. And if every class would have a suggestion box so you could say what you thought of that class."

5. The student council should help improve communications.

a. Junior girl - "if the student council puts up some activities for the student body at lunch and in the morning -- like sock hops and even a juke box in the cafeteria. If we would have more activities a week and let the dress code go for one day a month or so school wouldn't be such a drag to come to for some students. People would then get together and so would teachers. It would be all right!!"
b. Senior girl - "if the student council invited more individual students, not members, to help them on projects. Also if the bureaucracy would be eliminated."
c. Senior boy - "if more adults (teachers) sat in on student council meetings, more students came to student council meetings, and teachers started talking with students instead of lecturing at us."
d. Senior girl - "if the student council had more freedom because as it is the administration has everything to say about the activities we have which are very few."
e. Senior girl - "if more students would voice their opinions through the student council. Also if the teachers and especially the administrators would take a little more time to work with and help student council members carry out their work as well as using more of their time developing better relations with students in general."

6. The dress code gets in the way of good communications.

a. Junior boy - "if we could abolish the dress code and the administration could be a lot more open-minded."
b. Sophomore girl - "if certain teachers wouldn't get mad at kids for wearing clothes that are allowed in the dress code (culottes)."
c. Junior boy - "I think teachers have gone far enough in giving the students what they want, long hair, short dresses, chewing gum in classes, and so on. It's only a foolish student who takes advantage and tries to get more than their share. Students should learn from grown-ups instead of trying to teach the teachers (in any school)."

7. More minority group teachers should be hired.

a. Junior girl - "There should be more Mexican and Negro teachers in the school so the Mexicans and Negroes could communicate with their own races, counting the white people along with the Mexicans and Negroes."

8. Improved teaching methods would help communications.

a. Senior boy - "if the teachers tried to look at things from a student's point of view. They ought to try a little change for the good for awhile instead of sticking with the old methods of teaching and communications."
b. Sophomore boy - "if teachers and the administration would try to be more down to earth in their attitudes and teaching."
c. Sophomore girl - "if the teachers tried harder, because several times one of my teachers gets mad because we ask about things we don't understand. I don't think it's fair because we come to school to learn, but we can't if the teachers get mad because we don't understand something."
d. Senior boy - "if teachers would pay attention to the whole class rather than a few members, and not act as though you're a nut if you ask a question that has already been answered that you didn't hear."
e. Senior boy - "if classes were not so stereotyped."
f. Senior boy - "if some of the teachers would realize we are all different and don't all react one particular way to what they teach and that education is not just what a teacher tells us but what we want to know about and not just books and facts."
f. Senior boy - "if the teachers would talk to us and tell us the facts and let us draw our own conclusions from it, and stop worrying that they are losing their influence over the class if the students question the facts and teachers' beliefs."
g. Junior boy - "if we had more things to do in classes, more things to test out, instead of just sitting around and reading or just answering questions. We need more things to do."
h. Junior girl - "if some of the teachers would do what they're paid for and just teach us instead of sticking their noses in our personal lives."
i. Senior girl - "if more of the things were left up to the students. Most of us are big kids now and should start learning how to stand on our own two feet. I feel if this was to happen when we get out of school we'll have a better chance and be more stable on our own."
k. Sophomore girl - "if the teachers acted more enthused about the course they were teaching and really cared if you learned anything. And if they had pride in what they were doing."
l. Sophomore girl - "if there wasn't such a pressure on the students about grades and report cards."
m. Sophomore girl - "if we didn't have so much homework you would have more time to communicate. I am so swamped -- I do 3-4 hours every night and then I have to study at lunch and before school."
n. Senior girl - "if the teachers would understand that we don't have complete knowledge of the subject we are taking and start from the beginning and really explain what the subject is. Not get upset with us

for asking questions that might seem trivial to them. Don't leave us to do everything ourselves."

o. Junior boy - "if some teachers did not act like the only thing they wanted was for the student to get his work done and be quiet."

A summary from one student's point of view.

Senior boy - "if all teachers would read the school announcements fully; if teachers and students would spend more time discussing problems and ideas; if the administration would more fully explain their policies and actions on school matters; if teachers and administration would have more of a personal relationship, not quite so professional; the biggest problem is that students want to help and are able to help, but many of the teachers and the administration feel there is no place for this 'assistance,' therefore disagreements and problems arise because of the lack of mutual understanding. If everyone would just sit down and talk about problems these problems would be eliminated.

"Also many teachers are past their 'productive years' and therefore the teachers are not effective; students do want to learn. Many of the older teachers are very set in their teaching habits and are not progressing in modern methods. If these teachers could be replaced or taught new methods, students would be more willing to communicate.

"Student-student relationships could be improved by establishing activities that involve the majority of the students and work for a common goal. Student council could be the key to the entire communication problem. It could, with the help of clubs and the administration."

VI. MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS, FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, AND STAFF

During the meetings this writer held with seventeen classes an opportunity was provided for good interpersonal two-way commucations to take place. Not only was communications being talked about, it was being engaged in. The teachers, counselors, librarian, supervisors, administrators, and secretaries sat in a circle with the students and participated.

Much of what was said was commented on in the questionnaires. Many of the points have already been brought out in this paper and will not be repeated. Rather, some of the divergence of opinion and a listing of what gets in the way of good communications will be made.

The most significant thing about the class meetings, in the writer's opinion, was the opportunity afforded everyone to hear firsthand how others felt about various aspects of the school. This was done in a relaxed informal manner.

While the purpose of the meetings was to make suggestions about communications improvements, there were several comments made concerning the feeling that communications are already good.

One student, for example, pointed out that he has a good feeling about the students in Flagstaff High School, and that it has a friendlier atmosphere than other schools he has attended.

Some students felt that most teachers are trying hard to communicate with them and that the comments made by many students sounded like they were picking on teachers. This was embarrassing to some. This embarrassment itself indicates a need for more interpersonal communications where statements can be made honestly and can be accepted without embarrassment on the part of anyone. It was apparent to the writer that such open discussions as were held were out of the ordinary for some who attended.

Several controversies arose during the course of the class meetings. The differences of opinion were as follows:

1. Should a teacher express his own personal views about issues related to school if they conflict with that of the administration? Some felt that any dishonesty on the part of the teacher might get in the way of his communications with the students. But, on the other hand, there needs to be cooperation between the administration and faculty. How can this problem be resolved?
2. Should teachers of math and science concern themselves with good two-way interpersonal communications? Several students and at least one teacher felt that the nature of these subjects made efforts of this kind unnecessary. How would the math and science departments react to this question?
3. How difficult is it for a student to be able to talk with a member of the administration if he wants to? The assistant principal commented that, while there always has been red tape, it is still fairly easy to see an administrator. A number of students did not agree and pointed out that the principal's secretary who meets students, not only made it difficult to accomplish this, but, in their opinion, was rude to students as well. What can be done to solve the problem concerning students contact with the administration?
4. Are teachers willing to take time to communicate with students outside of class? The assistant principal remarked that he felt that 90% of the teachers would stay after school to help students, but several students thought only 10% would. What can be done to make it possible for individual students to communicate with teachers outside of class?

Much of the classroom discussions can be considered under the heading of <u>what the students feel gets in the way of good two-way interpersonal communications</u>, as follows:

1. Failure by some to sense how important small problems can be.
2. Pressure on some teachers to cover all the material in a book.
3. Impatience by anyone.

4. Failure by some to get problems out in the open and to deal with problems when they come up.
5. Peer group pressure which may keep students from talking to teachers outside of class. This pressure may also cause some students to appear rude to teachers when they are disciplined in front of their peers.
6. Too much formality in some teachers' actions and dress.
7. Classroom seating in rows.
8. Boring classes. Several students commented that they can be busy and still be bored.
9. The overreacting to students of minority groups by some teachers. Minority students say they want simply to be treated with equality but not indulged.
10. Too much talking by some teachers.
11. Non-verbal behavior which may show that one does not mean what he says. Other non-verbal behavior which may give out incorrect messages as when fear in some students may give the appearance of snobbery. To make such feelings clear to others they should be verbalized.
12. Special privileges of the faculty, in the cafeteria for example.
13. Teachers who are rigid.
14. Some teachers who put off students with "I'll see you later about that" but never do.
15. Disruptive tactics of a few students who make some classes difficult for teachers to communicate with.

In addition to the above, one factor was brought up which, from the teacher's point of view, makes communications difficult, not only between the teacher and the student, but also between the teacher and the counselor. This has to do with students being taken out of the same class too often by a counselor. As some teachers see it, they cannot communicate with students who are not there, and such removal creates a barrier between them and the counselors. This is a problem which needs attention.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The many comments made during this assessment indicate that each group in the school considers itself responsible for its part in communications improvement. The importance of good communications was evident from both the verbal and written comments. People wrote and spoke enthusiastically about their feelings concerning the subject. It is the writer's impression that the students, faculty, and staff look to the principal for leadership in communications, as well as in all other aspects of the school.

Often mentioned as a deterrent to good communications is a lack of time. While there is an assumption that if one had more time he would spend it in interpersonal communications, this is not necessarily true. It will happen if the person -- student, faculty member, staff member, or administrator -- makes the effort. For many it is easier to do an assignment, put up a bulletin board,

or move a box than to communicate meaningfully with a person or group. But good communications, though intangible, may be the most important activity in the school.

One English teacher, for example, told of talking individually with students about their writings rather than, as in the past, placing red marks on their papers as a means of improving their work. This is a significant step from impersonal one-way to interpersonal two-way communications.

The communications within the classroom are within the control of the teacher except in those classes where a small number of students are disruptive. Teachers, the students are saying, should examine their personal and organizational behavior to see if they are communicating well. This does not mean that everyone has to communicate in the same way; each has his own style of teaching just as each student has his own style of learning. Some teachers lean heavily on non-verbal response from their students which, in the case of sensitive teachers, may work well. Teachers should be observant of non-verbal behavior. Since, however, this kind of behavior can be read inaccurately, it cannot be considered a total substitute for the verbal telling by the student of how he feels about the class and the work that he is doing. At the same time, there is no substitute for the teacher telling the students honestly and openly what his feelings are concerning himself and the class.

There are many recommendations contained in this survey which apply to personal behavior. It will be up to each individual to determine for himself what aspects of his personal behavior he should be aware of in order to do his share to improve communications.

It is in the area of organizational behavior that specific recommendations will be made. These recommendations are the result, not only of the survey itself, but also of conferences the writer held with faculty members, administrators, secretaries, and students. It is recognized that many of these recommendations, for one reason or another, cannot be put into practice. All, however, should be considered.

The recommendations are as follows:

1. The principal and assistant principal should meet occasionally with various classes to discuss informally questions which the students have about the school. The principal should also consider meeting informally with special groups such as the student council, clubs, and unorganized groups which may contain some of the school's "natural leaders" who don't participate in organized activities.

2. If a teacher finds that it fits his style of teaching, he should try group discussions as a means of communicating with his students. Especially at the start of the semester he could use several small groups in each class to help him and the students to get to know each other on a more personal basis.

3. A program of group counseling should be started. Each group should contain representatives of various segments in the school. This activity should help bridge the "generation gap" between students as well as between students and faculty.

4. A study should be made to see what routine duties, now performed by the administration and faculty, could be delegated to the staff, and also how the staff could be used more efficiently. It would help, for example, to have one secretary start work at 7:30 a.m. and another who works until 5:00 p.m.

5. Time during school hours should be made available for activities in which both students and faculty can participate, and for meetings which involve students, faculty, administration, staff, and parents. Days for communications should be provided for as part of the school year.

6. The counselors should meet more often with teachers to discuss the handling of student problems.

7. Secretaries who deal directly with students should be chosen for their ability to relate well with young people.

8. There appears to be difficulty in getting adequate custodial service in the building which results in too much of the principal's time being spent on this problem. Possible suggestions would include the selection of a head custodian, the employment of a woman custodian, and the study of the feasibility of performing basic custodial services after school hours.

9. Written school policies need to be explained to both students and faculty in such a manner that questions can be asked and answered in an informal atmosphere. A superintendent's newsletter could be an aid in this endeavor.

In conclusion, the experiences of the writer in working on communications problems in schools has led him to believe that basic to all school improvements is good interpersonal two-way communications. There are four important principles, in his opinion, which lead to good communications:

(1) The creation of an informal atmosphere. (2) The lessening of role-playing to the absolute minimum needed to maintain the structure of the school. (3) The willingness of all persons to share feelings as well as thoughts. (4) The development of trust in all people in the school.

Teacher Survey

This is a survey of your feelings about communications in high school.

1. Check the following spaces to show your two-way communications relationship with the following people:

	NO CONTACT	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Principal					
Assistant Principal					
Supervisor					
Counselors					
Librarian					
Fellow Teachers					
Student Teachers					
Nurse					
Secretaries					
Custodians					

2. Circle the percentage of all your students with whom you feel you have good two-way communications.

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

3. Complete this sentence in any way you wish using the back of the paper if necessary:

I think we would have better communications in this school if

Student Survey Please do not put your name on this paper.

Boy____ Girl____

Circle grade: 10 11 12 Class this period_____

New student in Flagstaff this school year: Yes ___ No ___

This is a survey of your feelings about communications in high school. Please fill in the blanks and underline the word which indicates your reaction to each statement or question.

1. The number of teachers I have in classes each day is ____. (Do not count student teachers.)

2. The number of teachers in my classes that I have good two-way communications with: none, one, two, three, four, five, six, more than six.

3. The number of teachers outside my classes that I have good two-way communications with: none, one, two, three, four, five, six, more than six.

4. The number of student teachers I have in classes each day is ____.

5. The number of student teachers in my classes that I have good two-way communications with: none, one, two, three, four, five, six, more than six.

6. The number of fellow-students that I have good two-way communications with: none, one, two, three, four, five, six, more than six.

Check the following spaces to show your two-way communications relationship to the following people:

	NO CONTACT	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Principal					
Assistant Principal					
Counselor					
Librarian					
Nurse					
Secretaries					
Custodian (janitor)					

7. Complete this sentence any way you wish using the back of the paper if necessary:

I think we would have better communications in this school if

_____

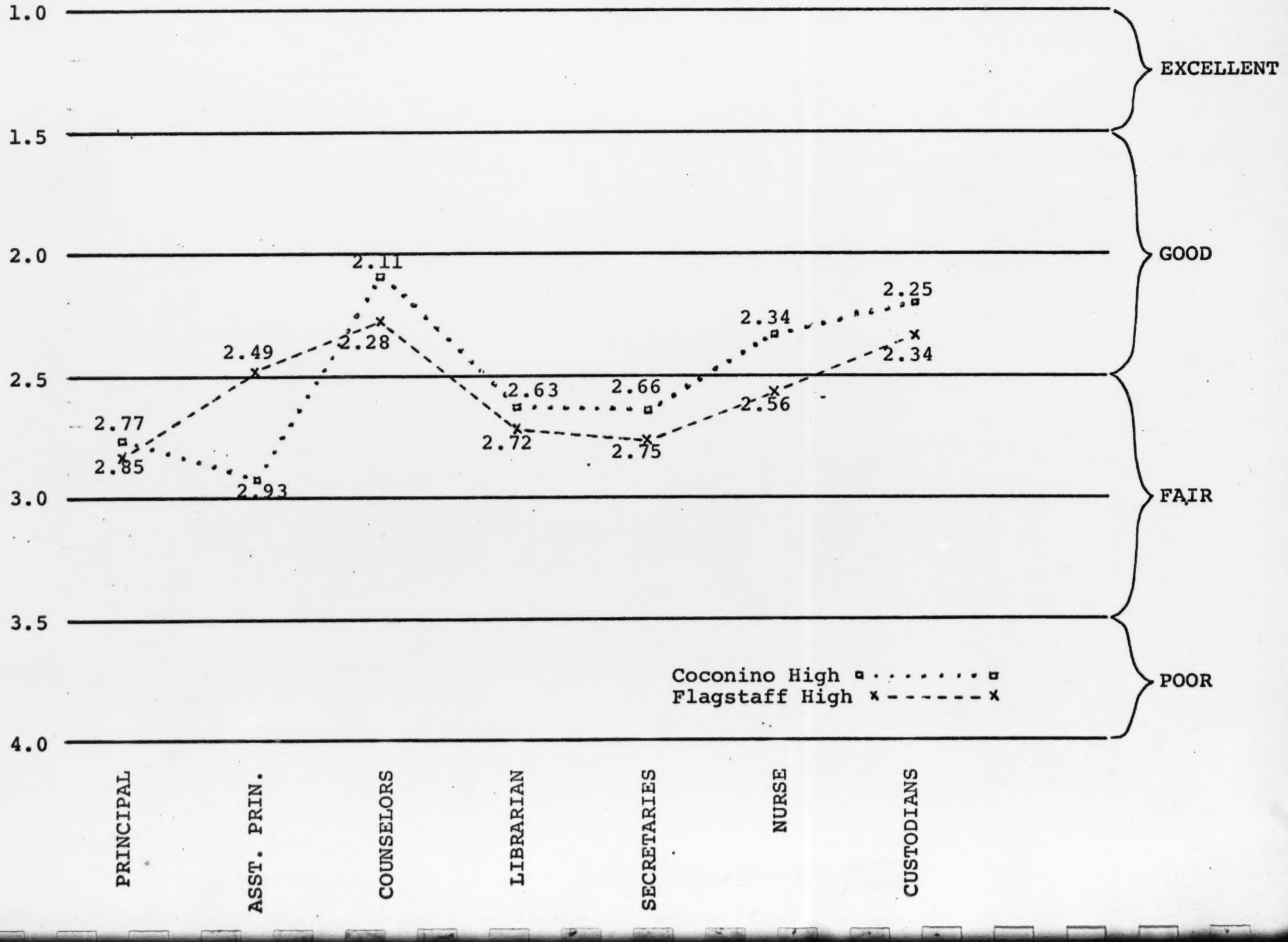
_____

_____

COMMUNICATIONS INDEX

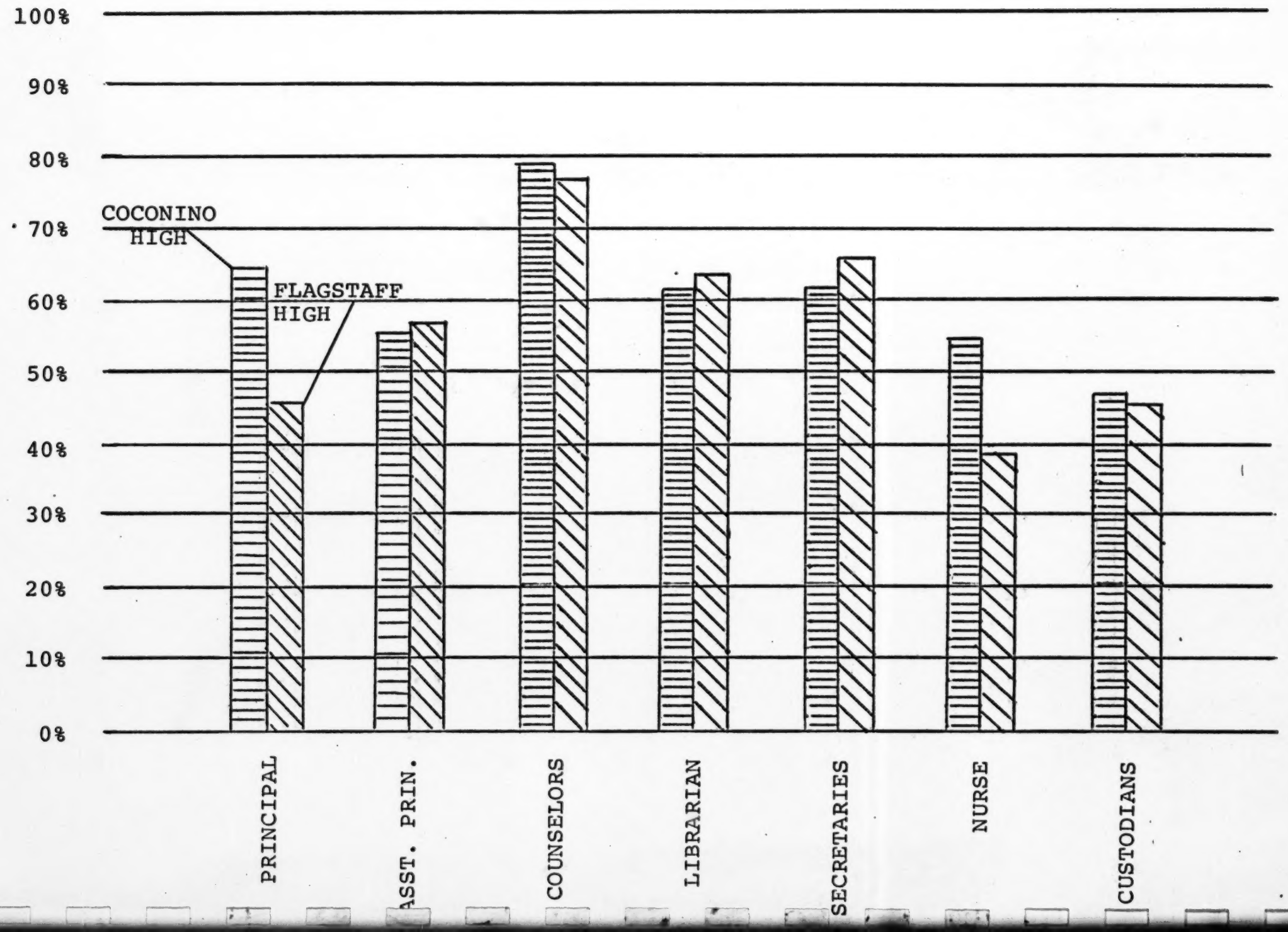
STUDENTS EVALUATION
COCONINO AND FLAGSTAFF HIGH SCHOOLS

FIRST SEMESTER
1969-1970



PERCENT OF STUDENTS HAVING CONTACT
WITH MEMBERS OF FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, AND STAFF

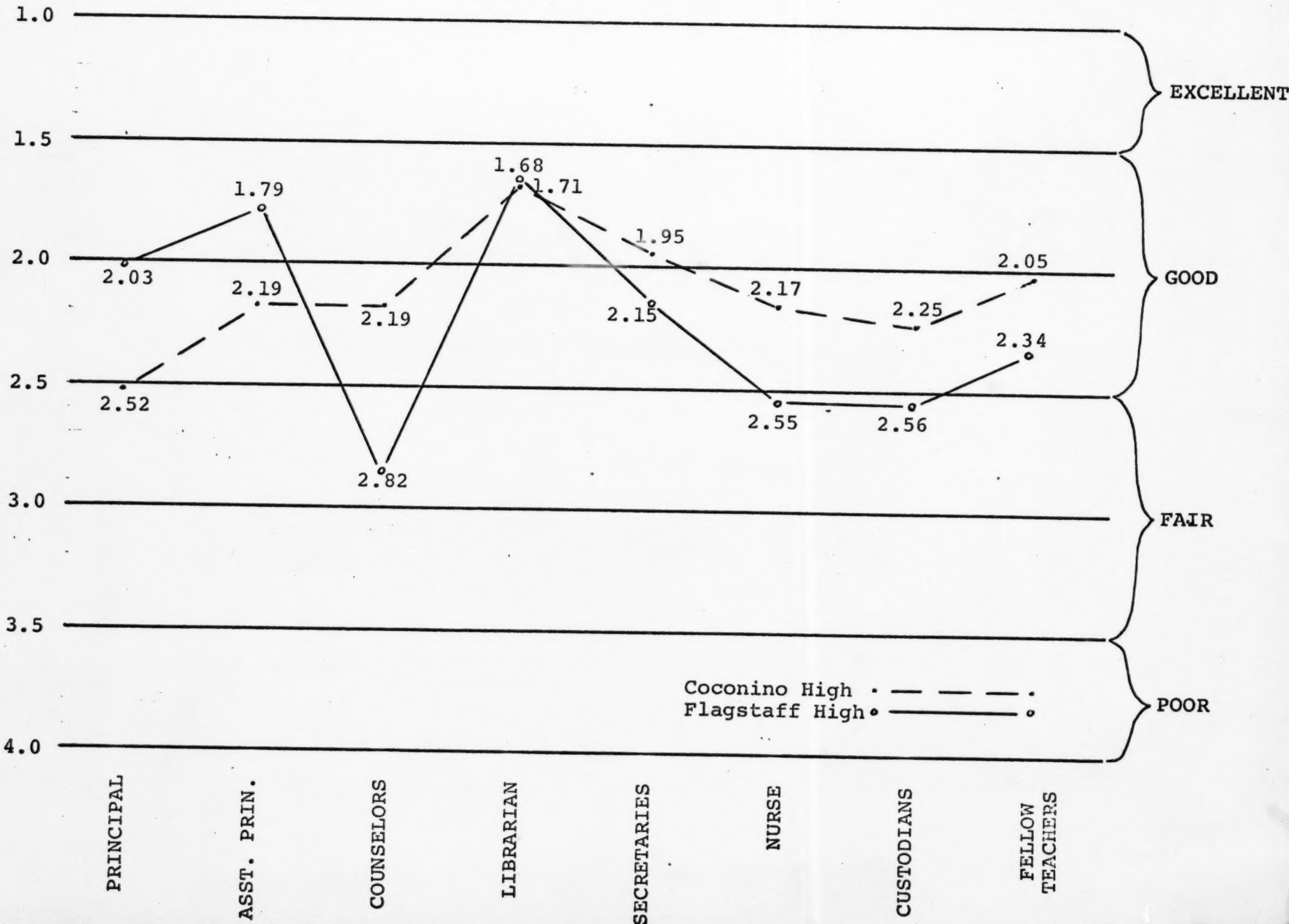
FIRST SEMESTER 1969-70



COMMUNICATIONS INDEX

TEACHERS EVALUATION
COCONINO AND FLAGSTAFF HIGH SCHOOLS

FIRST SEMESTER
1969-1970



PERCENT OF STUDENTS
WITH WHOM TEACHERS HAVE GOOD COMMUNICATIONS
AS DETERMINED BY THE TEACHERS

FIRST SEMESTER 1969-70

COCONINO HIGH		FLAGSTAFF HIGH	
Percent of students	Number of teachers	Percent of students	Number of teachers
0%	0	0%	0
10%	1	10%	0
20%	0	20%	3
30%	2	30%	5
40%	0	40%	1
50%	2	50%	3
60%	0	60%	1
70%	3	70%	5
80%	6	80%	5
90%	5	90%	5
100%	0	100%	0
no response	2	no response	1
total	21	total	29

HOW STUDENTS SEE THEIR COMMUNICATIONS WITH TEACHERS

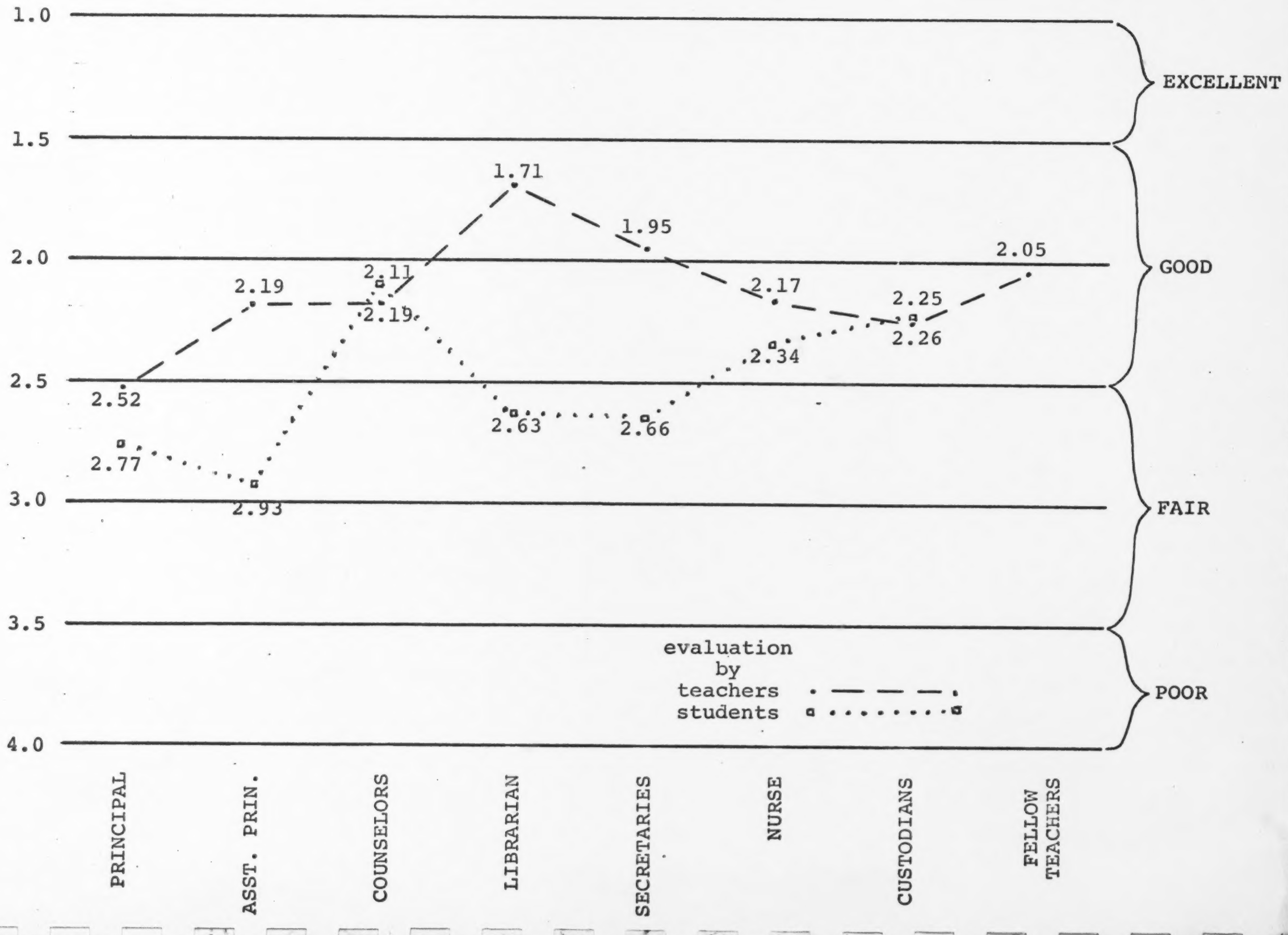
FIRST SEMESTER 1969-70

	COCONINO HIGH				FLAGSTAFF HIGH			
Good, two-way communications	BOYS		GIRLS		BOYS		GIRLS	
With all teachers	10.6%		9.6+%		13.7%		13.3%	
With more than half but not all	27.0%	59.3%	34.3+%	58.1+%	30.4%	60.5%	29.3%	57.0%
With one-half	21.7%		14.2+%		16.4%		14.4%	
With fewer than half but at least one	29.1%		32.2+%		26.6%		30.1%	
With none	11.6%	40.7%	9.6+%	41.8+%	12.9%	39.5%	12.9%	43.0%

COMMUNICATIONS INDEX

COCONINO HIGH SCHOOL

FIRST SEMESTER
1969-1970



GREEN & BROWN

Vol. 49 No. 5 Flagstaff High School, Flagstaff, Arizona Friday, December 12, 1969

NASEC conducts survey

We would have better communications if "there were not so many teachers that feel that they are so super cool."

This was one of the many student comments that were given in answer to the Northern Arizona Supplementary Education Center survey on communications. Mr. James Sanders, who works with NASEC, conducted the study.

The purpose of the survey was to see how communications could be improved in the school. No matter how good communications are, they can be improved, Mr. Sanders stated.

There were three parts in the survey. The first two involved surveying the faculty (also principal, counselors, and librarians), and then the students, on their opinions. The third part was meeting with the faculty and the students in discussion groups.

Mr. Sanders met with 371 students in the classrooms, mainly juniors and seniors. They involved 26 teachers, two supervisors, the administrators, counselors, and secretaries.

The discussions were all open to any subject. In many cases school problems were discussed P.E., mid—term graduation, counseling, and communication blocks. Students felt that the formality of the front office prevents better student-administration communication.

Out of 508 students surveyed, 15 felt that communication isn't a problem at Flaghi. The others who commented definitely did. Some of the suggestions for improvement in communication included: teachers and students trying harder to understand each other; more activities involving both teachers and students; classes being taught on "the students' level."

Other suggestions were as follows: more teachers being hired from minority groups; teachers not evaluating students on their modes of dress; a suggestion box and letters to the editor; teachers having a more informal attitude; having Student Council sponsor noon and morning activities.

"Teachers should remember that students are human, too," one student stated.

Another added that communications could be improved "if there wasn't such a pressure with grades and report cards."

The teachers made suggestions also. Mr. Sanders reported that one teacher complaind that students never spoke to her outside of the classroom.

Evidently, several students felt that they were not trusted, giving these comments:

"I think a system where the student could be trusted would improve the school immensely," one student said.

Another comment stated, "If students were trusted more it would improve communication."

Mr. Sanders stated that when he spoke of communications, he meant not only verbal, but also non-verbal.

"Non-verbal communications are very important, and if we smile at people, they're more likely to speak to us," explained further. "Do we really look like we want to communicate?"

New students felt they didn't communicate well because they were not able to find opportunities to meet with more students and teachers.

The present problem with the cafeteria is a perfect example of a communications block, commented Mr. Sanders.

Mr. Sanders says that his final report will be given to the school as soon as it is completed.

GREEN & BROWN

Vol. 49 No. 6 Flagstaff High School, Flagstaff, Arizona Friday, January 30, 1970

Mr. Sanders, through survey, gives ideas for better communications

Mr. James Sanders has finished the results of the communication survey that was given to Flaghi in November. In the last GREEN and BROWN issue, a report gave the feeling of the students towards teachers and administrators

Mr. Sanders made up a report and evaluation of the survey called "An Evaluation of Interpersonal Communications in Flagstaff High School." In it he commented that each group in the school (administrators, faculty, and students) holds itself responsible for its part in the improvement of communication. Communication is very important, and is the basis for all improvement in all schools, he said. He felt that "the students, faculty, and staff look to the principal for leadership in communications as well as in all other aspects of the school."

Mr. Sanders made recommendations to the school for bettering two-way communications, and may of them are up to the individual.

Some of these are as follows: Teachers should try group discussions as a means of communicating. Time during school hours should be for activities in which both faculty and students can participate. He also said, "Secretaries who deal with students should be chosen for their ability to relate well with young people." School policies should be explained to everyone.

Mr. Sanders ended his report with four important ways to have good communications in school:

" 1. The creation of an informal atmosphere. 2. The lessening of role-playing to the absolute minimum needed to maintain the structure of the school 3. The willingness of all persons to share feelings as well as thoughts 4. The development of trust in all people in the school "